

To: CN=Ayn Schmit/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA;CN=Martin
 Hestmark/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA;CN=Jim Martin/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA;CN=Dominic
 Digiulio/OU=ADA/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA;CN=Dayna
 Gibbons/OU=DC/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA;CN=Gregory
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Cc: []
From: CN=Richard Mylott/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US
Sent: Thur 10/11/2012 6:24:30 PM
Subject: Latest (3) Pavillion news reports

<http://bit.ly/RiHrAS>

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County 10 News: Possible contaminant found in gas well pits near Pavillion; No interpretations of USGS data yet

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AP: New EPA Pavillion data, comment period extended

Posted: Oct 11, 2012 11:33 AM MDT Updated: Oct 11, 2012 11:33 AM MDT

CASPER, Wyo. (AP) - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released new data from west-central Wyoming, where the agency theorizes a link between hydraulic fracturing and groundwater contamination.

The EPA says its new data is consistent with past samples it took from the Pavillion area.

Meanwhile, the EPA on Wednesday extended by three months the period in which the public may submit comments on the data collected so far. The Casper Star-Tribune reports (<http://bit.ly/RiHrAS>) public comment will now be taken until Jan. 15.

The EPA theorized last year that fracking may be responsible for certain chemicals and high pH in Pavillion-area groundwater. Fracking involves blasting pressurized water, chemicals and sand into wells to improve the flow of oil and gas. State officials and others disputed the finding and participated in additional sampling this year. Information from: Casper (Wyo.) Star-Tribune, <http://www.trib.com>

County 10 News: Possible contaminant found in gas well pits near Pavillion; No interpretations of USGS data yet

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About 50 people attended Wednesday's Pavillion Working Group meeting at Central Wyoming College. (Joshua Scheer photo)

By Joshua Scheer, reporter, county10.com

(Riverton, Wyo.) – With about 50 people in attendance, the Pavillion Working Group was updated on a

number of topics surrounding the investigation into groundwater contaminants, which could be linked to hydraulic fracturing, east of the town.

Notably, the task force testing soil in gas well pits for hydrocarbon concentrations found enough of the compound naphthalene to mention it to the group. Environmental Protection Agency's Rob Parker said the compound was the only substance found above regional screening levels. According to the federal agency's website, the substance is used in the creation of mothballs and in the production of a chemical substitute in some plastics.

"We'll be talking about modeling that compound," Parker said, to see if the concentration is at levels where it could contribute to groundwater contamination and require remediation.

Oil and Gas Conservation Commission Natural Resource Analyst Tom Kropatsch said nine pits in Encana's field were sampled. The group talked about needing to improve data quality, as the first round of testing was unable to test for low concentrations of other compounds.

Conclusions about naphthalene and other compounds found have yet to be made.

Additionally, results from the United States Geological Survey and the EPA based on testing done at one of the EPA's monitoring wells have been released, but interpretations of the data are forth-coming. No dates have been set for interpretation release, though Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality Director John Corra said he has urged the teams to be timely.

Much of the first three hours of Wednesday's meeting at Central Wyoming College focused on how the USGS drew its samples and why a second monitoring well was not tested.

USGS staff explained that in order to accurately test the water in the aquifer, water in the well had to be purged to get a better sample. Samples were taken after one purge and after three purges. Debate surrounded whether or not the third was more representative of the aquifer than the first.

USGS representative Warren Day explained that monitoring well two is a low-yield well, meaning it does not produce much water. Different sampling methods were required to test it, but it was decided there was not enough time to meet the EPA's September deadline. The EPA has since extended the deadline.

A video camera was sent into well two to determine possible causes of the low yield. Corrosion of the steel was found, as well as blockage around at least half of the screen where water enters the well. There were disagreements as to the makeup of the blockage.

The corrosion found was unexpected, USGS staff said, because the well was believed to have been constructed with stainless steel. The EPA later confirmed that it was built using thread and coupled steel. The well was also found to be 9.5 feet deeper than originally thought. EPA principle investigator Dominic DiGiulio admitted schematics he had approved were incorrect and that it was good to know the wells true depth. He said the depth was not a contributor to the low yield.

Other topics:

-Keith Clarey of the Wyoming Water Development Office updated the working group on the cisterns project approved by the State Legislature to provide safe drinking water for residents with potentially contaminated wells. A \$460,000 contract with Riverton's James Gores and Associates is in the works for the engineering of the project. Clarey said 20 landowners have requested assistance, however three are outside of the project's boundary. Those wells will need to be tested before being approved for aid. Gov. Matt Mead's natural resource policy advisor Jeremiah Rieman said the project was initiated because Mead wanted to assure residents had a clean water source, and that it was not an admission of liability.

-More than an hour of discussion surrounded investigations into wellbore integrity of gas wells on Encana's fields near the affected landowners. More data collection is needed to be sure cement in the holes are holding. There is not concern about the integrity of the wells' casings. A separate task force meeting on the topic will be held in the near future at the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's office in Casper.

-No future working group meetings were scheduled.

Boulder Weekly: EPA vindicated

Pavillion groundwater tests appear to confirm earlier EPA findings on fracking

By Joel Dyer

Photo by Joel Dyer

The EPA's deep test well, left, and a horse

When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its long-awaited draft report on its investigation into the groundwater contamination near Pavillion, Wyo., in 2011, the oil and gas industry knew it was in trouble. The EPA's Pavillion report was the first study to blame drinking water contamination on hydraulic fracturing, the industry's sacred cash cow. And worse for the industry, local farm and ranch families were blaming a variety of health problems on the contaminated water that was flowing from their wells. The industry's reaction to the EPA report was swift and predictable.

Oil and gas insiders from company CEOs to oil-funded university researchers blamed everything for the contamination, with the exception of fracking: naturally occurring faults, poor drilling practices such as not enough casing, bad cement jobs and unlined storage ponds.

They could explain away, albeit with logic-strained arguments, why the area well water smelled and tasted like lighter fluid. But they struggled to find an explanation for why the EPA's test wells found many of the chemicals associated with fracking in the deeper ground water aquifer.

So last November, the industry grasped at its last straw. It claimed that the EPA was incompetent, used shoddy science and had actually caused the contamination itself when it drilled its test wells. It then enlisted its political allies from Congress to the Wyoming governor's mansion to discredit the EPA and block the release of the agency's final report, which blamed fracking for the contamination and consequently would have had major ramifications for the entire nation when it came to fracking oil and gas wells. As a result of the political pressure, the EPA backed down and agreed to wait until an outside source retested the water. The aquifer was retested earlier this year by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the results of the new test were released on Sept. 26. According to a statement released by EPA spokeswoman Alisha Johnson, the USGS test results were "generally consistent with groundwater monitoring data previously released by EPA."

In addition, experts, including hydrologist Tom Myers of Reno, Nev., who was hired by Sierra Club, Earthworks and the Natural Resources Defense Council to evaluate the USGS findings in comparison to EPA's earlier report, agree that the EPA has been vindicated and appears to have been correct in its earlier findings.

The ball is now back in the oil and gas industry's court, but it remains to be seen if it will continue to dispute the EPA and USGS findings or if the residents of the small town of Pavillion will finally be compensated for their pain and suffering.

Richard Mylott

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